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THE MUSLIM VOICE

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BUSH DEGREE SPARKS UPROAR

War Criminal Given Honourary Degree by University of Toronto

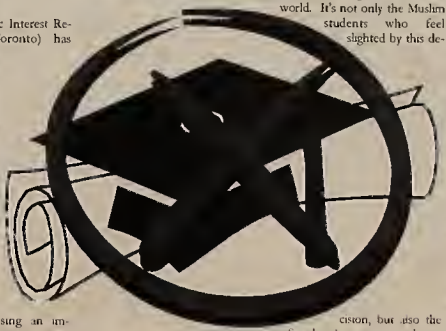
By Adil Mughal

Recently, there has been a vicious uproar throughout the normally serene University of Toronto campus. Many student groups and organizations have joined hands to, if not stop, then to at least express their frustration on the recent decision undertaken by the Committee on Honourary Degrees to offer former president of the United States, Mr. George Bush, an honourary doctorate.

It did not take much time for the media sources based in, and out, of the university to jump on such a controversial issue; letters, articles, displays, web-sites, and petitions seem to be proliferating all over the campus. It seems that Mr. Bush's reputation as a hero does not conform with a vast amount of this society's members.

"There is nothing in George Bush's long career which makes him worthy of honour from this University. He was responible for violations of both international and American law, bloody foreign interventions and invasions, political corruption and support of covert terrorism in regions too numerous to mention." (O.P.I.R.G. statement)

The Ontario Public Interest Research Group (Toronto) has launched an energized campaign to convince Mr. Robert Prichard (UofT president), Mr. Hal Jackman (Honourary Degrees Committee Chair), and the Members of Governing Council, to rescind their invitation to Mr. George Bush for the 19th of November convocation. O.P.I.R.G. seems to be one of the most prominent groups in the 'anti-Bush' campaign, using an immensely large list of petitioners as their lifeline. Other groups have also showed their support for O.P.I.R.G's stance on this issue, such as A.S.S.U. (Arts and Science Students Union), a list of over 60 graduate students and professors at UofT, The Muslim Students' Association, and others.



Shiraz Sheikh, President of the MSA of UofT St.George, has agreed to back the 'anti-Bush' campaign with the members of his organization. "I feel insulted that UofT would honour a man who has been a significant source of problems caused throughout the Muslim world. It's not only the Muslim students who feel slighted by this decision, but also the South American students. Bush was the man who ordered U.S Forces to invade Panama resulting in the deaths of 4000 Panamanians and the destruction of thousands of private dwellings, commercial structures, and private buildings!"

Sheikh exclaimed. "I cannot recall a time that we have ever, as Canadian citizens, deemed him a person deserving honourary recognition," and it is with these words that Sheikh stands by his decision.

Is this man really deserving of such recognition, or is this just an attempt to improve the University's reputation south of the border? This appears to be the mental dilemma for our source at Simcoe Hall. "He is a very contentious candidate to choose for this honour," expressed our source, "aside from the fact that his public actions of remark only serve American, and his personal self-interests, his actions have also been very insulting to the Muslim community, the Latin American community, and to underprivileged people all around the world. When I think of *honourary recognition*, I think along the lines of Mother Theresa or Nelson Mandela, not George Bush."

After all this negative feedback on Mr. Bush's qualifications, one must wonder why this man was even

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SLANDER

One of the Ugliest and Most Common Vices Found Among People

By Mostafa Azzam

The teaching of Islam is so all-encompassing that it not only deals with the outward aspects but also the inward aspects of oneself. The Muslim is always on guard against any evil vices that may slip into his character without him knowing. It is through the processes of *mujahada* (striving) and *muraqaba* (monitoring) that one is able to control and rid oneself of these ugly traits. The following is on holding one's tongue in general, and on slander in particular. Most of it is edited from 'Book r' of *Reliance of the Traveler* as edited from Imam Nawawi's *al-Adhkar al-muntakhaba min kalam Sayyid al-Abrar*. Imam Nawawi considers knowledge of slander amongst the things "that every religious person needs to know" (*Rel*, 728). Later will come discussion of the particular vice of the tongue slander. First is the following on the importance of holding one's tongue in general.

Importance of Holding the Tongue

Says Imam Nawawi,

> Every legally responsible person should refrain from saying anything except when there is a clear advantage to speaking. Whenever speaking and not speaking are of equal benefit, it is sunna to remain silent, for permissible speech leads to that which is unlawful or offensive, as actually happens much or even most of the time - and there is no substitute for safety. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), said,
>
> "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him say what is good or remain silent."

This hadith, whose authenticity Bukhari and Muslim concur upon, is an explicit legal text indicating that a person should not speak unless what he intends to say is good, meaning that the benefit of it is apparent to him. Whenever one doubts that there is a clear advantage, one should not speak. Imam Shafi'i (Allah have mercy on him) said, "When one wishes to speak, one must first reflect, and if there is a clear interest to be served by speaking, one speaks, while if one doubts it, one remains silent until the advantage becomes apparent."

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace):

(1) "O Messenger of Allah,

art sean wang

which of the Muslims is best?" And he said, "He who the Muslims are safe from his tongue and his hand."

(2) "A servant unthinkingly says something pleasing to Allah Most High for which Allah raises him whole degrees. And a servant unthinkingly says something displeasing to Allah Most High for which he plunges into hell."

(3) "The excellence of a person's Islam includes leaving what does not concern him."

(4) "Do not speak much without mentioning Allah (dhikr), for too much speech without mentioning Allah hardens the heart, and the hard-hearted are the farthest of all people from Allah Most High."

(5) "All of a human being's words count against him and not for him, except commanding the right, forbidding the wrong, and the mention of Allah Most High (dhikr)" (*Rel*, 729-730).

Slander

Imam Bayhaqi lists among the seventy-seven branches of Faith, "concealing the sins of others" (*The Seventy-Seven Branches of Faith*, 55). As evidence he cites the verse from the Holy Qur'an, *Those who love slander to spread regarding those who believe shall have a painful punishment in this world and in the Afterlife*, [24:19] and the saying of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) narrated in Bukhari and Muslim, " A Muslim is a Muslim's brother; he does not wrong or betray him. Whoever aids his brother will be aided by God. And whoever relieves a believer of a trial will be relieved by God of one of

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YOUR VOICE: LETTER OF THE MONTH
The Midwifery Reality

Re: *Health Care Horror* by Anwer Khan, appearing in the Sept./Oct. 1997 issue of The Muslim Voice.

"Our sisters are not encouraged to study midwifery to solve the dilemmas of our community."

There is truth to this comment. However, to understand why this is the case, one must take a look at the recent history of midwifery in Ontario. First of all, Ontario is the only province in Canada that has legalized the practice of midwifery. In 1986 the Ontario government set up a task force to study the midwifery profession. They addressed such issues as safety, education, qualifications and back-up. After nearly two years of an in-depth study, the task force recommended the legalization of midwifery in Ontario. They suggested a framework that would recognize and regulate midwifery practice. Even the implementation of a separate Midwives Act was introduced. A system of consultations and referrals between midwives and physicians was favoured, however, it clearly stated that no midwife would be permitted to practice except in a practice, service, agency or other health faculty approved by the Minister of Health. In December 1992, a baccalaureate programme in midwifery was announced by the Ontario Government. The first class was admitted in August 1993. The programme is jointly offered by Laurentian University, McMaster University and Ryerson Polytechnic University. Despite the demand for midwives, introducing midwifery into the post secondary system for the first time, especially in the midst of decline in government funding, was a great challenge. In the first year of the programme's existence, only 7 placements at each of the three institutes were available. The following year the number of placements went up to 17 and has remained stable ever since. However, the number of placements available in comparison to the number of applicants applying...? Well, there's just no comparison. For example, this past September of '97, an average (among three institutes) of 280 applicants applied for 17 available placements according to OUAC). To put it in simplified terms, that means that each applicant has an approximate 6% chance of getting in! Subhan Allah. Alhamdulil'Llah, there was a sister who was among that percentage but by Allah's Will had to decline the acceptance. There is (I have been informed), one sister who will insha' Allah be graduating from the program this year and may be insha' Allah the first Muslim midwife in Ontario... *subhan Allah*, as one can clearly see, getting into the programme is a challenge in itself.

Pursuing midwifery is not as easy as it sounds. Let alone being one. Not all sisters have the stomach for it or the challenges that come with the profession. For example, let's assume there is a sister out there who is a midwife. This sister is on call 24/7. Maybe this sister is even married, with children to raise Islamically. She may have or may not have a husband who's up to having his wife's pager go off at 3 o'clock in the morning and that she may a 24 hour labour to attend to. Mid-

wifery is a profession full of struggles and sacrifices not just for the midwife but for their families as well. And not all sisters and families are prepared to deal with them. Maybe that's why it's not encouraged.

One reason that *"the Muslim response to this dystopic scenario has been quite disappointing"* may be because of the fact that our community is not informed about the choices they have. And for some reason they expect to be informed instead of informing themselves. Do we expect that the non-Muslim media (who will only wait until there is something scandalous to report in the midwifery community) to tell us about our childbirth options? How many of us were informed in the late 1980's that the practice of midwifery was legalized? Did we even know that Ontario was the first province to legalize it (Insha' Allah, BC to be next)? Further more, do we know what midwifery is or what midwifes do? Unfortunately, many of us still have literally, no clue. Some think it's an 'ancient ritual' that certain 'radicals' are trying to reestablish to gain back control. And on the other extreme, some have never even heard of the term 'midwifery'. As Muslims we should look toward more tactful objective resources besides the western media to inform us about our choices. We must not get into a habit of waiting till the non-Muslims are doing it and then to jump the band wagon, especially not on the issue of midwifery. For it is an area in which we are dealing with many extremes that need to be understood.

As Muslims, we must remain level-headed and realize when there is a need for an OB/GYN (obstetrician/gynecologist) and when there is need for a midwife. Both play an important role in the childbirth experience and both can also contribute to a positive or negative experience. There is of course, a distinct (and proven) difference between these roles and experiences. For both professions take on a different outlook, and thus a different approach to childbirth itself. (But that's a whole other story). A system of consultation and referrals between midwives and physicians should be encouraged, a system that the task force in 1986 did favour. For once a birth becomes high risk, the midwife is replaced by someone who is qualified to counteract those risks — a physician. Thus, in recognizing that each birth is different and has it's own degrees of potential risks, the necessity (or choice) for technology must be understood. Not all technology is *"counter productive"*.

"Most doctors today see pregnancy as a disease, which thus requires frequent and sometimes very stressful intervention."

I do believe that the "medicalisation" of childbirth has contributed to many problems that the health care system is facing. Childbirth has traditionally always been something done at home. Just seen as a natural event in one's life. Hospitals on the other hand, were established to cure and treat 'the sick.' And pregnant women are not 'the sick.' In fact, they are at the most healthiest time in their lives (for their immune systems are in the best state than it will ever be during any other part of their life). However, what if a pregnant women is diabetic, has cancer or AIDS or any other disease or syndrome that places them and/or their baby at risk? Allah (Exalted is He) has given women the ability to naturally deliver a child, free of any intervention. And Allah has given us the means to create and use technology/forms of intervention and if it means saving lives... subhan Allah. There is a middle way. If and when childbirth can be done naturally, it should be done, as it always has been. Sisters must not under estimate the ability Allah has given them. It is your jihad and a rewarding one, subhan Allah.

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, write into us. Our contact info is found under "The Muslim Voice Staff".

"She is forced into the worst possible position for delivery (for the convenience of the doctor), with no privacy and a time-limit to complete her labour."

It is very true that lying flat on your back while giving birth is *the* worst way to deliver a baby. Simply because one is not working with the downward force of gravity but in fact against it. While the woman (lying on her back) is pushing forward, gravity is pulling downward and thus, both are 90 degrees to each other. Not only a position is painful for the mother, especially terrible for her lower back, but for the baby inside her as well. Obstetricians though, are slowly changing that method.

It is difficult to have privacy in a hospital while delivering. But sisters have learn to address their needs rather than expecting the health care system to read their mind. All non Muslims do not know about our extent of modesty in Islam and they will never know unless we inform them.

The time-limit factor is related to money, both on the doctors' end as well as the hospital's. The longer the delivery, the higher the hospital bill. And if the obstetrician has any part in speeding up the delivery (necessarily or otherwise), he/she makes more money depending on the risk involved in the administration process. For example, if an oxytocin (synthetic hormone that stimulates uterus contractions) infusion was administered to induce labour, the OB would make $62.30 more at the end of the day (according to the Ministry of Health). If an anesthetic such as an epidural is given he/she would make $152.40 more. Just a general anesthetic would earn him/her about the same amount. A cesarean section birth would give an OB $63.57 more than a natural vaginal birth. And if a hysterectomy and c-section are done together the OB would be making $265.59 more from that one patient alone. Interventions can be seen as a means to make more profit, but one must also recognize that in some cases it's a matter of decreasing potential risk factors and saving lives. That's what its primary purpose was and should still be. There are physicians who are abusing that purpose but not all should take the rap for it. It's only fair.

"If the obstetrician has any part in speeding up the delivery (necessarily or otherwise), he/she makes more money depending on the risk involved in the administration process. For example, if an oxytocin infusion was administered to induce labour, the OB would make $62.30 more at the end of the day (according to the Ministry of Health). If an anesthetic such as an epidural is given he/she would make $152.40 more...."

Midwifery is a simple solution to our overburdened health care system. Its outlook encourages natural childbirth but at the same time recognizes the need for medical intervention. It would help prevent the unwanted costs to our health care system by avoiding unnecessary induced labours (i.e. oxytocin), anesthetics (i.e. epidural), and c-sections. Having more births at home would decrease the hospital bills. We must do this though while still maintaining a public health care system. Many can argue that because of the privatized system the US midwives (called nurse-midwives down there) have had the freedom to practice there, for quite sometime now. Which is true, however, the US does not only have the most privatized system in the world but the most expensive health care system in the world. Thus, a balance of OB/GYNs and midwives within a public system is the way to go.

When midwifery was first legalised back in the late 1980's, there were only 71 midwives in Ontario. As of now, there are 149 practicing (Association of Ontario Midwives - AOM). In comparison to OB/GYNs - 637, to continuously in-

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The Muslim Voice is published by a group of young Muslim students, and seeks to bring people closer to Allah, by addressing issues of relevance to Islam and Muslims. The majority of the articles are written by university students.

The Muslim Voice serves firstly as a forum for the Muslim youth of Toronto, and secondly, to the rest of the Community.

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O Allah! Guide us to the Straight Path! O Allah! Unite the hearts of the Ummah, for only You can unite them!

Bush Honour 'Insulting'

(Continued from page 1)

proposed for such recognition. A recent letter published in *The Varsity*, UofT's main campus newspaper, gave an optimistic account of Mr. Bush's past. Everything from being a 'military hero' to 'freeing Kuwait from unlawful rule,' even to 'exercising good judgment in foreign affairs,' was mentioned; however the letter's concluding paragraph includes the statement "...by no means should his negative contributions override [illegible]." Apparently, to many members of the University, as well as this society in general, Mr. Bush's *negative contributions* were a lot more powerful than what a 'few' voices believe. It all seems to boil down to one question: Why would UofT select such a controversial candidate? Sheikh, president of the MSA of St. George, claims he has heard that Mr. Prichard wants to make UofT the "Harvard of the North." If this is the case, many students fail to see any of these degrees.

All Muslims are encouraged to attend the November 19th rally against the University's decision of awarding Bush an honourary degree outside Hart House. More information is available from Shiraz Sheikh, President of the MSA St. George, at (905) 420-0854.

Adil Mughal is News Editor for The Muslim Voice

The Midwifery Reality

(Continued from page 2)

crease annually, as the demand for them is very high.

Midwives seek to restore a sense of intimacy and community throughout the birth process, one of personalized care. It's a profession in which the woman's right is respected, in which the pregnant woman is the decision maker. She chooses where she would like to deliver and whether she wants a natural birth or anesthesia. However, the midwife's responsibility goes beyond mother to child. They use their own discretion in order to take both mother and child safely through delivery. Thus, the place of birth should not jeopardize the safety of either of them. Midwifery in Ontario is taking a very open-minded approach, one of accessibity and cultural sensitivity. They are not just taking a medical approach but a socio-cultural approach which integrates traditional birth with appropriate birth technology as well as providing support and counseling to patients.

For any sisters who want to learn more about the outlook and approach of midwifery, who are interested in pursuing a career in childbirth or who are just looking for a midwife, insha' Allah there will be an information workshop/seminar early next year.

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Preparing To Be Parents

Childbirth Educator Points Out Benefits of Educating Oneself Before Birth

BY SUZANNE MUIR

As a Muslim childbirth educator and *doula* (childbirth assistant), I am often asked by doctors and nurses why Muslim parents don't tend to take childbirth classes to prepare for their baby's birth. There are a few factors which impact our comfort level with the current childbirth education offered in Ontario. Perhaps Muslim parents feel that co-ed classes offered by the hospital will be awkward and force them to talk about subjects more appropriate for discussion in a gender separate setting. Some Muslim couples might not feel their level of English is high enough to allow them to get the full benefit from a class. Many people cannot afford prenatal classes offered by the hospitals or private teachers. Others feel that you can't really learn to give birth, it is something that will just come naturally. All of these are valid reasons, but similarly there are many benefits to taking prenatal education that will fit your Islamic and health needs.

Studies have shown that women who get some prenatal education have better birth experiences, even if there are health complications. Your prenatal class will not only describe the natural events of birth but also the unexpected things that might happen. You can never be totally prepared for what will happen, but sometimes knowing the possibilities can facilitate your acceptance of the course that Allah has set out for your baby's birth. Many people think that prenatal classes are all about breathing and giving birth without pain medication. In fact, childbirth classes vary in their content, but most are concerned with preparing you to make choices about your baby's birth along with the expertise of your health care giver.

Fear and apprehension are a big factor in the outcome of your baby's birth. The brain is set up on a pain-fear-tension cycle. When you feel pain, your immediate reaction may be to think that you are in some danger and to become afraid and tense. The more tense you are during birth, the more pain you may experience. You may even lengthen your labour or stop it completely by being tense. Learning about the natural and medical pain management choices available at hospitals and with home birth may help you to relax and feel that you have some strategies for coping with the pain of labour.

Understanding Allah's great miracle of birth is a natural part of being Muslim. To study the process that the mother's body and baby goes through during birth is truly an amazing reminder of Allah's power. So much of scientific information about fetal development has been revealed in the Qur'an. Similarly you may have many Islamic questions about pregnancy and childbirth that can be answered by a Muslim childbirth educator or health care provider. Many Islamic questions come up in my childbirth preparation classes about: du'a's to make during birth, the sunnah of welcoming a new baby, the issue of post-partum bleeding, and breastfeeding. Prenatal classes with other Muslim sisters or couples can be a way to share information and meet other new Muslim parents.

Finally, as Muslims, who use the Canadian health care system, we need to know our options and rights. Most hospitals are becoming aware of the needs of Muslim families. Taking a prenatal class can give you the vocabulary and confidence to be able to talk to doctors, midwives, and nurses about your health and Islamic preferences. For example, while it is understood by some hospital staff that Muslim women wearing hijab require more privacy in the birthing room, often sisters who don't cover and don't explain their desire for modesty are not accommodated in the same manner. Communicating effectively with your care giving team at the time of birth will help to ensure that your needs are not overlooked or stereotyped.

Still the barriers remain to our community becoming more knowledgeable about childbirth. For those parents who do not feel comfortable with a mixed class, there may be women-only classes offered in your area. Another option is to hire a childbirth educator to come to your home and teach the family members who wish to be involved. In my practice I have taught couples, mothers by themselves, and mothers with their mothers, sisters, aunts, friends, etc., and if language is the barrier, bring a friend to your prenatal class who can translate, or, investigate the multilingual services that public health offers in your area. Prenatal classes can be expensive, especially when offered by the hospital where you are going to deliver. Sometimes fees can be adjusted when there is legitimate financial need. There are also some free seminars and drop-in programs set up by public health that are worth attending. Finally, it is true that the outcome of your baby's birth is Allah's Will. Much of childbirth is instinctual – something a mother's body just knows how to do. Childbirth classes can help you become more aware of your body so you can relax and better understand the natural process it wants to take.

Young women who are considering marriage should start their prenatal education early as some preventative measures can give you and your future baby a head start before she or he is even conceived. The care giver you choose before you get pregnant may impact the kind of care you will receive during your child bearing years. Knowing your options in Ontario regarding childbirth assistants, midwives, and doctors before you get pregnant may ensure you get the care giver best suited to your needs when the time comes. Whether your prenatal education is taking a class, reading the Qur'an and other books, asking your doctor or midwife questions, or simply talking with friends about their experience – every little bit will help you feel more prepared to be a patient, insha Allah.

Suzanne Muir is the founder of Community Childbirth Services which provides a prenatal education program for Muslim families, and workshops about childbirth and Islam for health care providers. To enquire about childbirth and Islam, she can be contacted at (905) 301-0994 or suzanmuir a linkos com

TMV FE

BY THE FLEE

Not a day passes which does not say, "O son of Adam, I have come to you t stay." When the day is passed, it is folded up and sealed, never to be reope

A Month in Time

Reflections on Living and Learning Abroad

By Farah Hussain

Editor's Note

The Rihla is a month long program of intensive Islamic learning which takes place every summer in the United Kingdom and is organized by the ground-breaking Ibn Abbas Institute. Several brothers and sisters have attended the program over the last two years and have benefitted much from its traditional approach. This is the story of one participant's experience. For more information on the Rihla, please contact The Muslim Voice.

Autumn time in the garden reminds one of the shortness of life. The diligent gardener reminisces of summer rose bushes scented with deep perfume, of buzzing bees, the sunlight dancing on intricate webs, and the occasional ripple of water as birds conference around the pond. These are the scenes of life in the garden and such are the memories that a gardener clings to as they brace themselves for the barren winter months ahead. As I sat in my garden during this transitory season I observed its pathways lined with fiery leaves, only the bittersweet crab apples dared to ripen and I, I as a silent witness to the squirrels storing their provisions was reminded of the passage of time.

Aristotle in the *Poetics*, a critique of Greek Classical Literature, advises that one should read a book three times in life. Once during youth, once in middle age and finally again in one's senior years, each time new things occupying the foreground and new moments captivating the reader. So too as I thought back to a lecture by Dr. Hassan Hathout at a conference in L.A, did his words take on new insight:

"Between man and God there is a link 'We have blown into him of our spirit;' and between man and dust there is a link, from dust he was created and to dust he will return. Some people spend their lives strengthening their link with God and others spend their lives totally devoted to dust."

Many people have asked me to tell them my impressions of this summer's Rihla in England; after much reluctance I have decided to try. Time is so limited as we juggle between school, family and *din*; in context with Dr Hassan's reminder, the Rihla was a time to strengthen one's link with God. Amidst life's chaos it is a blessing to be able to focus on *din*. However the course's average 18-hour learning day was about more than lessons in Arabic, hadith sciences and Islamic jurisprudence – they were lessons about life and death.

Patience

Instead of scrambling to enumerate the things that the course has given new insight into, I will instead touch on the concept of patience. Patience has been divided into four categories by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah in his book *Uddat as-sabirin wa dhakhirat ash-shakirin* (translated as *Patience and Gratitude*). Most participants can attest to enduring each category of patience through the duration of the course. His first category includes physical patience by choice, such as doing hard labour willingly, the second is physical patience without choice, such as bearing illness or extreme heat or cold. Third is psychological patience by choice, such as refraining from things

which both the Shari'ah and common sense say are wrong. Fourth is psychological patience without choice, such as forced separation from loved ones. Separation from family, physically draining hours of study and sleepless nights, unsatisfied stomachs and striving in acts of devotion and worship were but a few of the challenges we persevered through.

The Hans Wehr Dictionary ties patience to the Arabic root word *sabr*, meaning to endure, refrain and stop. It has been linked to two opposing forces in *Uddat as-sabirin*. It involves the driving force, which pushes us towards good things and the restraining force, which holds us back from harmful actions. Patience then has many other names, according to the situation. If patience consists of controlling one's stomach, it is called self-control, the opposite of which is greed. If it consists of keeping quiet about that which is not fit to disclose, it is called discretion. If it consists of being content with what is sufficient for ones needs, it is called abstemiousness. If it consists of controlling one's anger, then it is called forbearance. If it consists of refraining from taking revenge, it is called forgiveness. The myriad of physical, emotional and spiritual demands of the month, those we had anticipated and others we had not, served to expand our understanding of patience and ourselves. Dr. Hassan continued:

"Your separation is to go to Allah. Keep good company so that your limbs do not fall into disobedience. Man is on the way of his companions, you don't want to look at the Day of Judgement and see shaytan. Be with eagles not with the vultures..."

Aspiration

What would it feel like to be surrounded by people striving in the way of Allah, to devote your time to gaining Islamic Knowledge, to be in the company of righteous teachers and really feel as though your day was a provision for the next life? To awake to the adhan being carried by the morning breeze, to stand in supplication with Muslims from around the world, students who in their diversity are nonetheless unified by Islam. We gained much just from being in the company of the shuyukh. Shaykh Muhsin An-Najar summarized this in his description of the prostration of the heart. The position of sujud is a position of humility and symbolizes total submission. Shaykh Muhsin asked, "Does the heart have sujud?" Yes, the sujud of the heart is manifested by our very existence, the way we speak to people and think of others. The end result of your quest for knowledge should be the establishment of a true sujud which everyone will recognise. These are the people that remind you of Allah (Exalted is He); they serve as inspiranen and strength to the believers.

It has been said that remembrance of Allah (Exalted is He) is medicine and nourishment for one's soul, and perhaps this explains the beauty of the Rihla. For one month this summer as students, we were humbled. As we increased in knowledge we became more aware of our inadequacies. God-willing we gained more from the month than hunger, thirst, exhaustion and separation from loved ones. This course was a different experience for each individual as a journey within oneself, to better understand our behavior and shortcomings, and as a journey to Allah, to better understand the practical implications of submission. Personally I can say that the course served many functions and I learned things much beyond the scope of this article but perhaps it can be best described by the distinction between living and being alive.

Life As An Escalator

One of the shuyukh warned that indeed the human perception of life can be compared to riding on a horizontal escalator: you think you are stationary, but all the while you are moving closer to death. This is but a taste of one month of time, an experience known as Ibn Abbas' Rihla in Nottingham. Perhaps I have only succeeded in discovering that the limitations of language will not permit me to convey an experience that was about feeling and acting.

The month was beneficial in many ways and if nothing else I offer you this explicit message: life is short, so cultivate it with good works to ensure that you taste not the bitter fruits of *Jahannum* but rather the incomparable beauty of the Eternal Garden in paradise.

Farah Hussain is a second year student at the University of Toronto, St. George Campus. Her sentiments and reflections speak volumes and are completely shared by two of the other Rihla participants from Toronto, Asim and Alison.

By Umm Salamah

I was riding the bus to school one day and in front of me sat a middle aged lady with a bag in her hand. I noticed the contents of her bag: Ruffles chips, a pack of cigarettes, a coke or beer and some cosmetics. I stopped and thought to myself if we – the people of this century – were to create a time capsule, that bag would be a good representative. **Stuff.** That is all it was, moreover, *dunya* **stuff.** Is this the 'pomp and glitter' that Allah warns us about? Is this what it means to be knee-deep in dunya? But, is it really that simple? Unfortunately dunya desires run alot deeper than that and all it takes to uncover that fact is to watch our own actions for one day or one hour.

Dunya Desires

Probably any Muslim or non-Muslim for that matter can easily illustrate the consuming nature of TV or music but what about the less obvious DD (dunya desires) tucked quietly away in our own hearts?

Its a little unsettling to find yourself awake at 3:30 in the morning concentrating your every last neuron on how to complete that essay which was assigned two weeks ago. And yet when its done a sigh of relief comes

"By the Flee
Verily Man is in a
Except those who believ
And enjoin one an
and enjoin one anot

Surah al

ATURE:

TING TIME ...

today and I will never come again, so be careful of what you do during my ened by anyone until Allah reopens it on the Day of Judgement. [Hadith]

Knee Deep In Dunya

over you: "I did it." Did what, exactly? Would we put such a concentrated effort into spending the night in dhikr of Allah, or do we even imagine it or yearn for it if we don't? Why is the thought of being with Allah in remembrance not enough drive for that Qiyam al-Layl, but some paper or test is?

Or better yet when the university course calendar comes out and you spend the next three hours charting out your four years. And the Qur'an awaits you on your shelf — untouched. Or unthinkingly plunking down $20 for bus tickets to get that secular education but it the halaqa isn't on campus then we can't go. Would we even spend that much to learn this *din*?

But its even more subtle; how about those times when we 'need a break' and go to buy that Kit-Kat and before you know it, it turned into a little fries on the side and a coke to wash it all down. And so it continues those seemingly harmless acts which are so routine and really can illustrate the same thing as our time capsule bag: DD is at work.

The Heart

But the point here is that its not exactly the purchasing of the food or the tokens but rather the *ease* with which the purchasing is done. Just ask yourself or see if that same ease is there in giving the same amount of money at Jumu'ah in the donation box. Its not about money its about the heart.

Remembrance of Allah

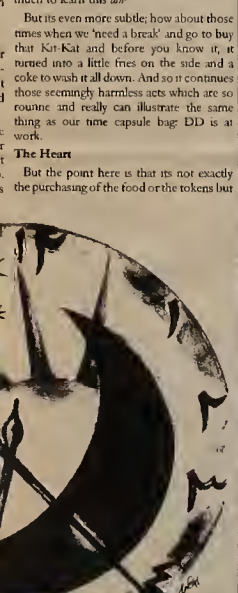
Its about monitoring what your heart loves and finds difficult. Allah, Exalted is He, says in the Qur'an, "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." *[al Ra'd, 28]*

If I have illustrated dunya desires as powerful then may Allah forgive me because *La hawla wa la quwwata illah bi'Llah*. There is no power except by Allah. And it is comforting to know that even though DD manifest themselves in many ways, they are flawed in the very meaning of their name: dunya. They are transient and unreal, and they too will vanish.

Al-Hasan al-Basri instructed, "Seek sweetness in three things: prayer, remembrance of Allah and reciting the Qur'an. If you find no sweetness in these, then know that the gate is shut."

Ya Fattah (O Opener), close not the door on us. Help those of us submerged in dunya desires not to drown in them, and give us the sweetness of *iman* and let us not waste our time in this dunya.

Umm Salamah is a university student.



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cung Time,
a state of Loss.
ve and do good works,
another to truth,
other to patience,"

al-'Asr

By the Token of the Ages

A Compilation From the Classical Texts

Nearly everything lost can be regained. However, for the time which has passed away, it is futile to hope for its return. This is why, among the possessions of man, time should be considered to be of the most valuable and precious. Man should spend his time as a greedy miser spends his money. He does not show the slightest carelessness in spending even the slightest amount, and he considers everything compared to wealth insignificant and of no value.

How will Man feel on the Day of Reckoning as he contemplates the years flown by? The Qur'an indeed paints a vivid picture - read *Yunus, 46; Ta Ha, 103-4; and al Naziʻat, 46.*

Thus the thoughtful Muslim values his time very dearly because he realises that Man is rapidly running towards Allah. Every revolution of the earth that brings a new morning is a stage in this path in which there are no stop-overs or 'time-outs.' Is it not wise that Man should not forget this reality, and that he should always keep it before his eyes? The past and the future should always be kept by him in his sight. It is only a deception of the sight that a man travelling by train should think that all the things outside of the train are running in the opposite direction at a fast pace, while he himself is stationary. The fact is that time is advancing towards its destination, taking Man with it; he cannot leave it.

One of the most eminent scholars in the history of Islam, Imam al-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) was reported to have said, "Time is like a sword; if you do not cut with it, it shall cut you." Duties are many, and the time to do them short. One should strive to use time wisely, because on the Day of Arising, it will either be one's closest friend or fiercest foe.

A limited sight can only see the perceptible manifestations and the limited signs; it is confined to the world's accidents and events, festivities and tragedies, while time makes the conceited tyrants eat the dust, trample the wishes and aspirations of men, and completely destroys even such civilisations whose achievements make people gasp in wonderment. It is time itself that alerts the intelligent and prompts them towards righteous deeds and collecting profitable material for the next world.

The Emissary of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) was reported to have said, "On the doomsday, no person will be able to walk a step further before answering four questions: in what acts did he spend his life, in what did he spend his youth, from where did he get wealth and where did he spend it, and to what extent did he act on the knowledge he attained."

This brings us to the ever important point of the utilisation of youth, as it is a precious time. After the onset of puberty, the first stage of youth begins, a stage where energy is abundant and strength continually increasing, which means that it is the stage most suited for winning rewards, doing good works, and avoiding sins and reprehensible acts. It is unusual to find a youth established in obedience, longing for good works, and neglectful of worldly desires and ephemeral pleasures. The Emissary of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said, "Your Lord wonders at a young man who shows no passions." Hence young people should be very careful to protect themselves against being dragged into Allah's wrath and painful chastisement simply by their youthfulness; let them instead make it into a means and a ladder leading up to the good pleasure (*ridwan*) of Allah and His tremendous reward. Said the Emissary of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace), "Seize [the opportunity to make use of] five [things] before five [other things come upon you]: Your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your leisure before your preoccupation, your wealth before your poverty, and your life before your death."

Youth is the time when acquiring merit, knowledge, and attaining positions of religious leadership and eminence are possible. One poet has said, *"If a youth has nothing to boast of when he reaches twenty years, he will never have anything to boast of."* Another declared: *"If you do not prevail in the nights of youth, then you shall never prevail, though you live long. Is the most of your life other than youth? Take what you can from it, and neglect it not."*

About making haste to works and the unworthiness of delay, Imam al-Ghazali says, "Know that whosoever has two absent brethren, and is anticipating the return of one of them the following day and of the other in a month's or year's time, will not make preparations for the latter, but only for the one whose advent is expected on the morrow, for preparation is occasioned when something is expected soon. Thus the heart of a man who anticipates the arrival of death in a year's time will be concerned with this period and oblivious of that which will come thereafter. But then each day will he awake and expect the year in its entirety, undiminished by the day which has just gone by. This will prevent him from making haste to works indefinitely, for he will invariably behold a generous span lying before him in that year, and postpone his (righteous) works..."

And the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, "There are two blessings in which many people are cheated: health and leisure." In other words, they do not take advantage of them, and only know their value when they are gone.

Said Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), "The Emissary of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) once went out while the sun was upon the tips of the palm branches [at the end of the day], and said, 'Nothing remains of this world save a time proportionate to that which remains of this day.'"

And the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said "The similitude of this world is that of a garment torn from end to end, but which remains attached by a thread at one extremity. That thread is almost broken."

So the Hour is near and our transgression uncountable, and time is something that cannot be spared. To put it in layman's terms, you have got only one shot, one chance, one time through this thing called 'life.' We have an appointed time before we meet our Lord. On the Day of Standing, there will be no more time for watching mindless sitcoms or what have you. It will really only be on that Day that we will truly realise just how little time we had when we face the infinite.

This article is a compilation of excerpts from Muhammad al-Ghazali's Muslim's Character, *Imam al-Ghazali's* Remembrance of Death *and Imam al-Haddad's* Lives of Man

Holding the Tongue

(Continued from page 1)

of the trials of the Day of Arising. And whoever conceals the fault of a Muslim will have God conceal his faults on the Day of Arising." Imam Ghazali lists silence about a brother's faults amongst the duties of brotherhood in Islam (*The Duties of Brotherhood in Islam*, 35).

Imam Nawawi calls slander "(one) of the ugliest and most frequently met with qualities among men, few people being safe from (it)." He considered warning about it "a widespread need." If this was so in his life, imagine the widespread need to warn people about it now!

Definition

Imam Nawawi:

Slander (ghiba) means to mention anything concerning a person that he would dislike, whether about his body, religion, everyday life, self, disposition, property, son, father, wife, servant, turban, garment, gait, movements, smiling, dissoluteness, frowning, cheerfulness, or anything else connected with him.

Mention means by word, writing, sign, or indicating him with one's eye, hand, head, and so forth.

Body refers to saying such things as that someone is blind, lame, bleary-eyed, bald, short, tall, dark, or pale.

Religion includes saying that he is a thief, cannot be trusted, is a tyrant, does not care about prayer, does not watch to avoid filth, does not honor his father, does not spend zakat on what it should be spent on, or does not avoid slandering others.

Everyday life includes saying that his manners are poor; he does not care about others; does not think he owes anyone anything; that he talks, eats, or sleeps too much; or sleeps or sits when he should not.

Father refers to saying such things as that his father is corrupt, his father is an Indian, Nabatean, African, cobbler, draper, carpenter, black-smith, or weaver (if mentioned derogatorily)

Disposition includes saying that he has bad character, is arrogant, a show-off, overhasty, domineering, incapable, fainthearted, irresponsible, gloomy, dissolute, and so forth.

Clothing means saying such things as that his sleeves are too loose, his garment hangs too low, is dirty, or the like. Other remarks can be judged by the above examples. The determining factor is mentioning about a person what he would not like (*Ref*, 730-731).

Not only may slander be about a person, but it may also be about a *group* of people: "Slander entails mentioning a particular person or a group of specific individuals" (*ibid.*, 733).

Evidence of Unlawfulness

The above defines slander. As for the ruling on it, it is unlawful, by the consensus of Muslims. There is much explicit and intersubstantiative evidence that it is unlawful from the Qur'an, sunnah, and consensus of the Muslim Community.

Allah Most High says:

(1) "Do not slander one another" (Qur'an 49:12)

(2) "Woe to whomever disparages others behind their back or to their face" (Qur'an 104:1)

(3) "...slanderer, going about with tales" (Qur'an 68:11)

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said:

(1) "Do you know what slander is?" They answered, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "It is to mention of your brother that which he would dislike." Someone asked, "What if he is as I say?" And he replied, "If he is as you say, you have slandered him, and if not, you have calumniated him."

(2) "The Muslim is the brother of the Muslim. He does not betray him, lie to him, or hang back from coming to his aid. All of the Muslim is inviolable to his fellow Muslim: his reputation, his property, his blood. God-fearingness is here [pointing to his heart]. It is sufficiently wicked for someone to belittle his fellow Muslim" (*ibid.*, 731-732).

Mimicking Another's Idiosyncracies

We have mentioned above that slander is saying anything about a person that he would dislike, whether aloud, in writing, by a sign, or a gesture. Anything by which one conveys a Muslim's (or non-Muslim's) shortcomings to another is slander, and unlawful. It includes doing imitations of someone, such as by walking with a limp, with a stoop, or similar posture, intending to mimic the person with such a deficiency. Anything of this sort is unquestionably unlawful.

> ***"The Muslim is the brother of the Muslim. He does not betray him, lie to him, or hang back from coming to his aid. All of the Muslim is inviolable to his fellow Muslim: his reputation, his property, his blood. God-fearingness is here [pointing to his heart]. It is sufficiently wicked for someone to belittle his fellow Muslim."***

Slander by Allusion and Innuendo

When the person being spoken to understands whom one is referring to, it is slander and unlawful to say, for example, "A certain person did such and such," or "A certain scholar," "Someone with pretensions to knowledge," "A certain mufti," "A certain person regarded as good," "Someone who claims to be ascetic," "One of those who passed by us today," or "One of the people we saw." This includes the slander of some would-be scholars and devotees, who make slanderous innuendoes that are as clearly understood as if they were plainly stated. When one of them is asked, for example, how So-and-so is, he replies "May Allah improve us," "May Allah forgive us," "May Allah improve him," "We ask Allah's forbearance," "Praise be to Allah who has not afflicted us with visiting oppressors," "We take refuge in Allah from evil," "May Allah forgive us for lack of modesty," "May Allah relent towards us," and the like, from which the listener understands the person's shortcomings. All of this is slander and is unlawful, just as when one says, "So-and-so is afflicted with what we all are" or "There's no way he can manage this," or "We all do it."

The above are but examples. Otherwise, as previously mentioned, the criterion for slander is that one gives the person being addressed to understand another's faults.

Slander in the Heart

Entertaining bad thoughts about others (*tu'al-zann*) is as unlawful as expressing them. Just as it is unlawful to tell another of the failings of a person, so too it is unlawful to speak to oneself of them and think badly of him. Allah Most High says,

"Shun much of surmise" (Qur'an 49:12)

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said,

"Beware of suspicions, for they are the most lying of words."

There are many hadiths which say the same, and they refer to an established conviction or judgment in the heart that another is bad. As for passing thoughts and fancies that do not last, when the person having them does not persist in them, scholars concur that they are excusable, since their occurrence is involuntary and there is no way to avoid them. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said,

"For those of my Community, Allah overlooks the thoughts that come to mind as long as they are not uttered or acted upon."

Scholars say this refers to passing thoughts that do not abide, whether of slander, unbelief (kufr), or something else. Whoever entertains a passing notion of unbelief that is a mere fancy whose occurrence is unintentional and immediately dismissed is not an unbeliever and is not to blame. The reason such things are excusable is that there is no way to take precaution against them. One can only avoid continuing therein, which is why persistence in them and the established conviction of them in one's heart is unlawful.

Whenever one has a passing thought of slander, one is obliged to reject it and summon to mind extenuating circumstances which explain away the appearances that seem to imply the bad opinion. Imam Abu Hamid Ghazali says in the *Ihya'*: "A bad thought in one's heart is a notion suggested by the devil, and one should dismiss it, for the devil is the most corrupt of the corrupt, and Allah Most High says,

"'If a corrupt person brings you news, verify it, lest you hurt others out of ignorance and then regret what you have done' (Qur'an 49:6).

"It is not permissible to believe Satan, and if the appearance of wrongdoing can possibly be interpreted otherwise, it is not lawful to think badly of another. The devil may enter the heart at the slightest impression of others' mistakes, suggesting that one only noticed it because of one's superior intelligence and discernment, and that 'the believer sees with the light of Allah,' which upon examination often amounts to nothing more than repeating the Devil's deceit and obscurities. If a reliable witness informs one of something bad about another, one should neither believe it nor disbelieve it, in order to avoid thinking badly of either of them. And whenever one has a bad thought about a Muslim one should increase one's concern and respect for him, as this will madden the Devil and put him off, and he will not suggest the like of it to one again for that one will occupy oneself with prayer for the person.

"If one learns of a Muslim's mistake by undeniable proof, one should advise him about it in private and not let the Devil delude one into slandering him. And when admonishing him, one should not gloat over his shortcoming and the fact that he is regarding one with respect while one is regarding him with disdain, but one's intention should rather be to help him disengage from the act of disobedience, over which one is as sad as if one had committed it oneself. One should be happier if he desists from it without being admonished that if he desists because of one's admonishment." These are Ghazali's words.

We have mentioned that it is obligatory for a person with a passing ill thought of another to dispel it, this being when no interest recognized by Sacred Law conduces one to reflect upon it, for if there is such an interest, it is permissible to weigh and consider the individual's deficiency and warn others of it, as when evaluating the reliability of court witnesses or

(Continued on page 8)

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Salvaging Our Identity

Our Ummah has Fallen into a Collective Amnesia

By Abdul-Muqsit

Brothers and sisters, I wish to address a very serious and tragic problem, one that is a great cause of contentious division among us, the *ummah* of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). The affliction to which I am referring to is that of prejudicism, dogmatism, intolerance, bigotry and other similar forms of mutual hostility between us, caused by a lack of understanding and appreciation for the **diversity** Allah (Exalted is He) has imbued in us and blessed us with. It is an excruciatingly disheartening and disdainful experience to find ourselves fighting against one another, rather than working together to wage jihad against the *kuffr* that surrounds us. Certainly, every one of us would agree that we must find a way to remedy the woeful state we find ourselves in. There are a number of different angles and levels at which we can approach a solution to this problem; the one I intend to focus our attention on in this article is our neglect of our **history**.

Now, your first reaction to this statement may be one of bewildered skepticism - 'is he trying to say that the reason Muslims in this community fight and campaign against one another is because we don't know our history?' Yes, that is precisely what I'm suggesting. In fact, I could go so far as to posit that one of the greatest problems facing this *ummah* in the so called 'modern age' is that we have collectively forgotten our history. Our ignorance of our own civilisation's history is a root cause of the narrowly confined views, intolerance and strife that are ripping apart the spirit of brother- and sisterhood that holds this *ummah* together. No, my dear brothers and sisters, I am not exaggerating in emphasising the vital importance of knowing our past, for without our history we have no **identity** - and, consequently, are left scrambling to find one.

An analogy that would help to effectively illustrate this point is to imagine yourself suffering from severe amnesia; you have very little recollection of your past, and know of it mostly through what you've been told by various family and acquaintances. Without any memories of your life experiences - the events which shaped your life, personality and attitudes up until now - you are subsequently robbed of your **identity**. Who you are, the way you are, your identity, is based on the experiences you've had in life. Without your memories you have lost your identity. Studies in psychology have documented actual cases of such severe forms of amnesia and the adverse effects that they have had on the individuals suffering from this affliction. They have found that the amnesiacs undergo tremendous stress and anxiety attacks due to the loss of their memory. Furthermore, it has been observed that in social situations the amnesiac suffers from a lack of confidence and personality stability, causing them to dramatically alter their mannerisms to adopt the behaviour of the person they happen to be interacting with at that moment; they in fact radically alter their behaviour from person to person depending on who they're with. Without the stable foundation of a personal identity, the amnesiac desperately grasps onto whatever kind of personality behaviour he or she is exposed to.

The situation of the amnesia sufferer resembles the collective condition we Muslims find ourselves in today, except on a much larger scale. Without having a firm understanding and knowledge of our past, we are frantically trying to piece back together an identity for ourselves, and in the process we find ourselves fragmented, divided, factionalised and unable to settle upon an identity we can all agree on.

The Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and give him peace) said that the best generation of Muslims was his generation (the *sahaba*), then the generation to follow his (the age of the Khulafa' ar-Rashidun and the tabi'un), then the generation after that (the early part of the age of the mujtahids and salaf as-salihin). It is these three generations that formed the basis upon which Islam and its civilisation grew and flourished from, and came to form the most advanced society the world has ever known. We must look at not only the example of our beloved Prophet, Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), for although he is our **primary** and most exemplary model, we must also look towards the exemplary behaviour and actions of the sahaba, the salaf and the other great and pious 'ulama that came after them, since they were closer to the Prophet than we. It is from this rich, complex and multi-faceted history and foundation of our *din* that we should try and draw our identity from. There is so much wisdom, and so much we can learn about how we should organise and carry ourselves just from the examples of the Rightly Guided Khalifs - in their reigns we find situations which more closely resemble our own less than ideal conditions, and there are many lessons and much wisdom that may be gleaned from their history.

"[Of] the greatest problems facing this ummah... is that we have... forgotten our history. Our ignorance of our own civilisation's history is a root cause of the narrowly confined views... that are ripping apart the spirit of brother- and sisterhood that holds this ummah together.... [And] without our history we have no identity... [and are] left scrambling to find one."

We must look at how the early followers of our Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), the sahaba, dealt with one another and governed themselves once he was no longer there to deal with them. There were many disagreements that slowly began to arise among them, but even then they still held great respect for one another, and did not denounce or ridicule one another's understanding or approach to various issues. They did their best to draw their rulings from what they witnessed of the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) behaviour and words, and tried to draw analogies to their own situations. Their rulings were based on the principles in the Qur'an and sunnah, to the best of their understanding; and their understanding (as can be attested to be the Prophet's own hadith) is far better than ours, as we have come so much later after our Prophet's passing (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Above all, they acted with genuine *taqwa* and sincerity, and this is reflected in their stories. For instance, it is recorded by the great shaykh-historian Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti, that even though 'Ali ibn Talib (may Allah be well pleased with him) was highly displeased with his khalif, 'Uthman (may Allah be well pleased with him) - especially with the stance he took in the last few days leading to his martyrdom - 'Ali still sent his two own sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with them), the very beloved grandsons of the Prophet, to stand guard at the gate of 'Uthman's house against those who were rioting against the aged khalif. Hasan's blood (may Allah be pleased with him) was shed when some rioters shot arrows over the walls and one grazed him. Upon returning from some business and learning of the khalif 'Uthman's martyrdom, 'Ali was so angry with his two sons for not having better protected 'Uthman that he slapped Hasan and struck Husayn in the chest. Now, let us ask ourselves, how many of us would risk the lives of our only two sons to protect another Muslim brother whom we were in serious discord with?

This is just one of the many examples of incredible piety and strength of character we can learn from and try to apply in our own dealings with one another. My dear brothers and sisters, the identity we are searching for is in our history. The great Muslims of our *din*'s glorious past are the role-models that we should try to emulate. If we continue to neglect the history of our past then we will continue to resemble a person suffering from amnesia - trying desperately to define ourselves, but working from a blank slate.

Returning to the analogy of the unfortunate amnesiac, we find that this person too is trying desperately to reclaim what they once were. They may inquire from those they used to associate with as to what they were like before their trauma occurred. They are told about some of the more notable things, like what they used to do, where they attended school, where they graduated from and so forth, by friends, co-workers, family and the like. But each person the amnesiac asks, gives him a slightly different perspective on what they thought his personality was like; for surely, each former acquaintance and family member observed him acting in different capacities and different roles. To some he was a husband, to some an employee, to some a son, to others a friend, to another a

(Continued on page 8)

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Amnesia Attack

(Continued from page 7)

brother, to others a co-worker. All of these people would give him a different angle on what his personality was like. When former friends, associates and family are asked about the amnesiac's personality they will all give varying answers based on what they were exposed to, some would describe him as caring and sensitive, others as dedicated and hard working, others might say he was fun-loving and adventurous. It is folly for the amnesiac to conclude that only one of these descriptions of his former self is accurate, and thus adhere to only that aspect of his personality and discard all the other aspects of his previously complex and multifarious identity.

This *ummah*'s collective memory has also been decimated, and we Muslims are trying re-claim our identity as "the best of humanity", and so we should; but problems occur and conflict arises when we become overly obsessed with a certain aspect of our *din*, and become intolerant and neglectful towards any other aspects of it. This *din* was transmitted to us by our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) fully and completely before he passed away. It presents a holistic way of life applying to *every aspect* of life.

Yet in this community we see brothers and sisters categorising one another. Those who are inclined towards tasawwuf are labled as "sufis" by other fellow Muslims, as if spirituality is something separate from being a Muslim. Those that are inclined towards the work of tahligh are labeled as "tablighis" as if the work of tabligh (propagation) is not an essential part of reinforcing and spreading Islam. People involved in MSA or ISNA are labeled "activists" or "khwanis" as if facilitation of Islamic activity is something unnecessary. The people labeled with these terms often take offense to being labeled — preferring simply to be called Muslim.

On the other end of this self-destructive behaviour are those that conclude that their way is the *best* and *only* way. Because they find themselves partial to certain practices within Islam, they start to think less of others who aren't also personally inclined to the same kind of work. It is this kind of intolerance that is destroying the fabric of Islamic brother- and sisterhood. Allah tells us in the Qur'an, "The believers are but one brotherhood." If we, as Muslims in North America, knew our history, we would realise that all of these practices are part of Islam. We would know of concrete examples where Muslims inclined towards one aspect of Islam or another, all lived and cooperated with one another and accepted one another's personal preferences of *'amal* (action). In Islam, everything done in life is an act of *'ibadah*, worship, as long as it is not *haram*, and as long as our intention is for Allah (Exalted is He). There is room for doctors, engineers, being active in sports, tasawwuf, tabligh, political organisation, da'wah and so on, all within the practice and parameters of Islam. Allah has given all of us certain talents — some find themselves predisposed or talented in the work of da'wah; others are able to inspire audiences with moving speeches. Others are good at organising events and lectures. We all have our talents bestowed upon us by Allah, and no one can be blamed for utilising these talents to their fullest potential. The problem occurs when we become so tunnel-visioned in our thinking that we start saying that this is the only activity of Islam worth doing. If we look to the early generations of Muslims, we'll find that the best Muslims had a balanced approach in their 'ibadah. They implemented all aspects of Islam into their daily lives with great fortitude, neglecting nothing, but they tended to excel in a few particular areas because of their natural Allah-given talents and dispositions. This is very different from our behaviour today, where we tend only to practice just the very basics of our Islam, and to concentrate the rest of our energies and efforts on wherever our personal inclinations lay. As Muslims, we must strive to bring balance and moderation to our lives and activities. Those practicing spiritual nurturing should also lend a hand at the da'wah table, or for different events and dinners. Those involved in Islamic work should not neglect their worldly education and familial responsibilities. Those involved in organising Muslim events and activities like camps and conventions should also take a break to reinforce their *iman* and inner spirituality to keep their intentions pure. All Muslims should enjoin upon one another to take up sports and physical activities so that young and old alike are in good health and prepared for *jihad*. One should have their priorities, but not allow those priorities overwhelm them at the expense of all other priorities.

Study history — let us make the correlations between the history of our past and the state of our present. We must not simply learn about the events and the chronology of political development, but much more importantly, we must reflect, ponder, wrestle with, and cry over the lessons of our history and try to glean out the wisdom of it. Let us also examine our past and the wisdom contained within the great and small *fitn* (tribulation) that have occurred between the Muslims, while withholding judgement upon those involved (for judgement is Allah's domain); yet still try to understand our history so that we may learn from the lessons of the past and not repeat the same mistakes in our present and future.

It is a sad state of affairs that instead of this *ummah* building bridges to the rest of humanity (as it is our *duty* assigned to us by to Allah) we are now forced to build bridges *within* the ummah to one another.

Allah did not create us as robots. Our thoughts, minds and looks are all different. Thus, our minds need not be united but our hearts should be.

Let us unite in our single unifying belief in Islam and not detract from the personal preferences of one another in our unanimous worship of the One Creator. Let us examine our past for the answers to our problems in the present. Let us analyse and study the heyday of Islamic civilisations, the great 'ulama, the khalifa, the great academics, the sahaba, and the Prophets (may Allah grant them all peace). Let us learn our history, and in doing so, learn to be loving and tolerant of one another.

'Abd al-Muqsit, Asim Qurayshi, is a Political (Science?) student who strongly discourages anyone from taking Islamic history courses at universities because of their twisted secular approach.

Guarding The Tongue

(Continued from page 6)

others of it, as when evaluating the reliability of court witnesses or hadith transmitters, and in other cases we will mention below in the section on permissible slander.

Permissible Slander

Slander, though unlawful, is sometimes permissible for a lawful purpose, the legitimating factor being that there is some aim countenanced by Sacred law that is unattainable by other means. This may be for one of six reasons:

(1) Redressing grievances;

(2) Eliminating wrongdoing;

(3) Asking for a legal opinion;

(4) Warning Muslims of evil;

(5) Someone unconcerned with concealing their disobedience;

(6) Identification.

[The details of these may be found in *Rel*, 737-740.]

Giving Positive Interpretations to Seeming Mistakes

Nawawi (Allah Most High have mercy on him) mentions, in the section of the introduction of *Sharh al Muhadhdhab* about the behaviour of teacher and student, that "it is obligatory to give a positive interpretation to every utterance of his brothers that seems to be wrong until he has exhausted seventy excuses. No one is incapable of this except a failure" (*Rel*, 757).

Wa'l-hamdu li'Llahi Rabbi'l-'alamin.

Mostafa Azzam is a student at the University of Toronto, St. George Campus.

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Test Your Knowledge

Can You Tell Me . . . ?

By Katherine Bullock

Our esteemed brother, Hamza Yusuf, likes to remind us that it is important to know our past. With that in mind here is a little quiz to test your knowledge of history. There is something special about the nouns in this short story. Can you guess what that is? (Hint: the nouns are underlined.)

The Admiral relaxed in his favourite cafe, sipping his coffee while waiting for Aladdin to arrive. Aladdin was late, and rushed in apologising profusely

"Sorry, Admiral! I was held up at the chemist, while she made a balm for me."

"Balm?"

"Yes, an apricot carmay and borax balm. It's good for you."

The Admiral grunted, he did not think much of 'nonsensical biochemistry,' as he called it.

An albatross circled above them, but they didn't have time to admire it.

The Admiral, picking off the al-

falfa sprinkled over his albacore, asked Aladdin what he had heard about the assassination of the bedouin.

"A cheque was found in the alcove where they found the bedouin. I had some Arabic on it, and smelt of alcohol. Obviously not the bedouin's, he was Muslim. The cipher is studying it." Aladdin chomped on his artichoke and aubergine. He didn't drink coffee, because he was cutting down on caffeine.

"What has the broker learnt?"

"Well, the broker met the bedouin at the cafeteria, and had given him amber to sell, so..."

Aladdin, now chewing his favourite candy interrupted, "So, the assassin shot the bedouin, snatched the amber, and dropped his cheque while fleeing?"

"Apparently so."

(Answer appears next month.)

Katherine Bullock is a student at the University of Toronto. Her column appears regularly in The Voice.

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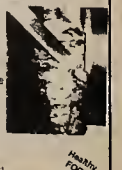

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